



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities**

Tallinn Roundtable on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations, 8 June 2009

Chairman's Summary

Representatives and experts from Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden met in Tallinn on 8 June 2009 in order to discuss issues concerning national minorities in inter-State relations in the Baltic Sea region. The meeting was convened by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia.

The Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in inter-State relations, launched by the High Commissioner on National Minorities in October 2008, constituted the framework for the meeting. The purpose of these Recommendations is to provide representatives of States, national minorities and international organizations with guidance on how to address the questions concerning national minorities that arise in the context of inter-State relations in a way that protects and promotes the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, prevents conflict, maintains inter-ethnic harmony and strengthens good neighbourly relations. By encouraging States to make appropriate policy choices in accordance with the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations and take measures to alleviate tensions related to national minorities abroad, the aim is to advance the ultimate conflict prevention goal of the HCNM mandate. The deliberations in Tallinn form part of the HCNM effort to this end in the Baltic Sea region.

While the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations are applicable throughout the OSCE area, their practical relevance may vary across different regions. The meeting in Tallinn discussed how the Recommendations translate into the regional context of the Baltic Sea States. The participants shared information and addressed contested issues, such as conferral of citizenship, and discussed good practices, particularly in the fields of cultural and educational support. Participants agreed that States can share responsibility for the protection and promotion of minority identities through, for example, teacher training, joint development of textbooks and cultural exchanges. Against the background of different domestic circumstances, the wide range of bilateral relations, and emerging challenges in the broader international context - notably the financial and economic crisis - the deliberations underscored the importance of clear guidelines such as the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations to uphold the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and at the same time contribute to friendly inter-State relations. The participants agreed that continued dialogue and improved understanding of the different perspectives are imperative.

At the meeting, the participants also heard introductory remarks by the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the representative of the Chairperson-in-office of the OSCE, followed by expert presentations. The meeting was the second in a series of expert round tables with the emphasis on the implementation of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations in specific regions where they could prove to be particularly relevant.